

STEPHANIE HERSETH SANDLIN
AT LARGE, SOUTH DAKOTA

WASHINGTON, DC
331 CANNON HOUSE OFFICE BUILDING
WASHINGTON, DC 20515
PHONE (202) 225-2801
FAX (202) 225-5823

<http://hersethsandlin.house.gov/>



Congress of the United States
House of Representatives

June 16, 2010

The Honorable Julius Genachowski
Chairman
Federal Communications Commission
445 12th Street, SW
Washington, D.C. 20554


Dear Chairman Genachowski:

I write to share my thoughts about the National Broadband Plan (NBP) and its potential impact on rural areas. I share your goal of ensuring affordable access to robust broadband service for every American and commend your attention to this important issue. Approximately 100 million Americans, many who live in rural areas, do not have broadband internet service at home. Key to extending broadband service to these areas will be reforms of the Universal Service fund that support broadband deployment. As you craft the policies that will achieve these goals, I urge you to consider the impact of your current proposal on rural communities.

In particular, I am concerned that some of the proposals contained within the NBP have the potential to set the United States on a course toward a greater technological and economic divide between urban and rural areas. For example, while the plan sets a long-term goal of ensuring 100 megabits per second (Mbps) download speeds for 100 million homes, it sets a goal of only 4 Mbps for rural areas. Setting two such divergent standards may only exacerbate the current technological divide between urban and rural areas, thereby limiting the ability of rural consumers and businesses to take full advantage of all the social and economic benefits that access to broadband affords. Further, it could impair the ability of telecommunications carriers to make investments necessary to deploy broadband services in our most rural areas.

I share the concerns of my constituents and others in rural areas around the country about the potential impact of the proposals in the National Broadband Plan on their ability to receive affordable broadband service. I request that you seriously consider these concerns as you implement the plan's recommendations and take the appropriate steps to ensure all Americans play a role in, and benefit from, the promise of broadband.

Sincerely,


Stephanie Herseth Sandlin
Member of Congress

SIOUX FALLS, SD
328 E. 8TH ST., SUITE 108
SIOUX FALLS, SD 57103
PHONE (605) 367-8371
FAX (605) 367-8373

RAPID CITY, SD
343 QUINCY ST., SUITE 102
RAPID CITY, SD 57701
PHONE (605) 394-5280
FAX (605) 394-5282

ABERDEEN, SD
121 FOURTH AVENUE SW, SUITE 1
ABERDEEN, SD 57401
PHONE (605) 626-3440
FAX (605) 626-3441

21 JUN 2010 RCUD

COMMITTEE ON AGRICULTURE
SUBCOMMITTEE ON CONSERVATION, CREDIT,
ENERGY, AND RESEARCH
SUBCOMMITTEE ON GENERAL FARM COMMODITIES
AND RISK MANAGEMENT

COMMITTEE ON VETERANS' AFFAIRS
SUBCOMMITTEE ON ECONOMIC OPPORTUNITY, CHAIR

COMMITTEE ON NATURAL RESOURCES
SUBCOMMITTEE ON NATIONAL PARKS,
FORESTS, AND PUBLIC LANDS

SELECT COMMITTEE ON ENERGY
INDEPENDENCE AND GLOBAL WARMING

UCB
NBP
PV
JG
1022



FEDERAL COMMUNICATIONS COMMISSION
WASHINGTON

OFFICE OF
THE CHAIRMAN

October 13, 2010

The Honorable Stephanie Herseth Sandlin
U.S. House of Representatives
331 Cannon House Office Building
Washington, D.C. 20515

Dear Congresswoman Herseth Sandlin:

Thank you for your letter expressing concern about the effect of the National Broadband Plan's (NBP) proposed universalization level of 4 Mbps on rural America. The NBP called for a Connect America Fund to enable all U.S. households to access a network that is capable of providing both high-quality voice-grade service and broadband that satisfies the National Broadband Availability Target. Recently, the Commission's Omnibus Broadband Initiative (OBI) staff released a technical paper addressing the Target speed, which I am enclosing for your review. The OBI paper details the reasons for the 4 Mbps level and notes the importance of periodic adjustments as the data supporting the Target continues to evolve.

The 4 Mbps speed is very aggressive and represents one of the highest levels in the world today for universalization, while the NBP's 100 Mbps number is based on a long-range goal. Few residential customers today subscribe to 100 Mbps service, and 4 Mbps currently is the median speed purchased by consumers. Only 6 percent of consumers subscribe to broadband service that is faster than 10 Mbps. Broadband service at 4 Mbps permits consumers to utilize its full benefits, including web browsing, e-mail, two-way video conferencing, and watching educational lectures online in standard definition. The Target speed also is "reasonably comparable" to the broadband service currently provided in urban areas, which is the standard mandated under Section 254 of the Communications Act for universalization. Cost is also a factor that needs to be considered – subsidizing universal 100 Mbps deployment today could cost as much as \$320 billion, which could increase the size of the fund to \$40-50 billion annually, and lead to a universal service fee, on average, of \$30 per month per American household.

Be assured that I am committed to making broadband affordable and attainable by all Americans, regardless of where they live or which service providers they use. I look forward to working with you and other Members of Congress as the Commission transforms its universal service policies to ensure that there will be no digital divide in our nation. Please do not hesitate to contact me if I can be of further assistance.

Sincerely,

Julius Genachowski

Enclosure